

More New Christmas Merchandise Just Arrived

Our Lines Are Still Quite Complete for Friday and Saturday Selling

Wishing
Our Customers and Friends
a
Merry Christmas

Gifts

For Men, For Women, For Boys, For Girls
For the Home

The J. W. Barnes Co.

Lomita, California

CUSTOMS OF CHRISTMAS EXPLAINED

Interesting Paper Read
By Mrs. Brooks at
Woman's Club

When our president asked me to tell you about Xmas in other countries and I began searching for material, the thought came to me, "Well, how did we come to have our Xmas customs?"

The customs that have come to us for generations, such as why do we use holly, have Xmas trees, eat plum puddings, etc., and in going into the matter I found such wide scope and such interesting material it was hard to decide what to tell you and what not to tell you. I have assimilated so much Xmas literature the past few weeks that in order to tell you just what I desire in a short time I will have to read from my notes and trust it will be as interesting to you as preparing this data has been to me.

Why Do We Keep Christmas?
Christmas celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ. The religious event is observed by the Protestant, Catholic, and Greek churches on diversified dates in different parts of the world.

The festivities of the day may be traced to the ancient rites celebrated in Scandinavia, Rome, Greece and Egypt, where the pagan people feared, as the dawn shortened in the darkest month of the year that the sun was dying, and observed a time of rejoicing when the sun began to stay with them a little longer each day.

The Origin of Our Christmas
For centuries before the Christian era every country in the world held its chief festival at the winter solstice, or turning point of the year. It is undoubtedly true that pagan forms taken from festivals like the Saturnalia marked the early Christmas celebrations. Later various portions of the Druidical rites were added and then some of the ceremonies of the ancient Germans and Scandinavians. This was because the early church sought to reconcile heathen converts by adopting the harmless features of their festivals, investing them, where possible, with a Christian significance. In this sense Christmas is a continuation of the pagan festivals, although, of course, it was the desire of the Christians to supplant the heathen celebration, not to continue it.

The First Christmas
Tradition says that Christmas was first observed in 98 A. D. and ordered to be held as a solemn feast by Pope Telesphorus in 137 A. D. The first certain traces of its observance are found about 140 A. D. It is not known who first celebrated it, nor where, nor how. There is no record of any commemoration of the day during the life of Christ, as the early Christians looked upon the celebration of birthdays as heathenish, and even the birthday of the Lord himself was not excepted.

How is Christmas Day Fixed?
About 340 A. D. Saint Cyril made careful inquiries as to the date of the birth of Christ and reported De-

ember 25th as the correct date. Pope Julius accepted this, and some years later established the festival at Rome on this date. Before the close of the century, it was accepted by every nation in Christendom. The actual year is unknown, and it is certain that the month and day can never be recorded. They were absolutely unknown to the early fathers of the church.

Why Christmas Centers Around a Star

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, it was the boast of Rome that "Millarium Aureum," the golden milestone from which her great military roads diverge, marked the center of the world. Today that stone is in fragments, while from the star that marks in the church of the Nativity, in Bethlehem, the place where Jesus was born, and commemorates the star that shone in the heavens over Bethlehem on first Christmas night, radiates influence that uplifts mankind, civilizes the world, and makes all mankind brothers.

Why Do We Present Gifts?

It was the custom among the Romans to make gifts to each other at their winter festival, and this custom may have descended to us from antiquity. But Christians like to feel that it is because the wisemen brought gifts to the infant Jesus, and because of the gift of Jesus to the world. Gifts to the poor seem from the earliest Bible times to have been an expression of a thankful heart. We bring him gifts when we give to those that are in need.

Why We Sing Christmas Carols

Singing Christmas Carols is a custom so old that even the origin of the word is in doubt. The first carols were modeled on the song written to accompany the choric dance and carolling—a combination of dancing and singing, which found its way from pagan rituals into the Christian Church. Carol singing flourished during the 16th and 17th centuries, and the greatest English writers, Milton and Ben Johnson among them, produced some beautiful carols. A century later Charles Leslie wrote the famous "Hark, How the Welkin Rings," better known now as "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing."

The earliest printed collection of carols was issued in 1621. It contained the famous "Boar's Head Carol" which is still sung every year at Oxford College.

The carol exists in France, where it is known as "Noel," and it is also existent in Germany and Italy, although the custom has died out in Scotland and some of the Continental countries.

How the Christmas Tree Came To Us
Saint Winifred, who was, in the eighth century, a missionary to the Scandinavians, is credited in an ancient legend with having caused to be set up the first home Christmas tree. He tried to show the people that the Druid priests had made them worshippers of trees only, and not a living God; and on Christmas Eve he hewed down the great oak tree around which they had gathered to offer a human sacrifice. As it fell a young fir tree seemed to appear miraculously beyond it, and Winifred said to the people:

"Here is the living tree, with no stain of blood upon it, that shall be the sign of your new worship. See how it points to the sky. Call it the tree of the Christ child. Take it up and carry it to the Chieftains' hall. You shall go no more into the shadows of the forest to keep your

feasts with secret rites of shame. You shall keep them at home, with laughter and songs and rites of love. The thunder oak has fallen, and I think the day is coming when there shall not be a home in all Germany where the children are not gathered around the green fir tree to rejoice in the birthright of Christ."

Where We Get the Christmas Card

Christmas cards were first printed in London nearly seventy years ago, but did not become popular until fifty years later. The first Christmas card was only a visiting card on which was written the greeting "A Merry Christmas," or "A Happy New Year." Snow scenes, holly branches and robins appeared later on embossed cards, probably picturing English Christmas scenery, as the robin is known in England as the Christmas bird and also as "The Savior's Bird," because of the legend of its red breast. This bird is still seen on Christmas cards, but not so often as formerly.

Candles on the Christmas Tree

Lighted candles were a feature of the ancient Jewish feast of lights. This was held about Christmas time, and it is likely that lights were twinkling in every Jewish house in Bethlehem and Nazareth at the very time of the birth of Christ. The custom was probably merged into the Christian celebration of Christmas. Other authorities claim that the candles were a survival of the huge Yule candle used as a sign of the light that came into the world as prophesied by John the Baptist.

Why Holly is Used

Holly grows in practically every country in the world, as there are more than 150 varieties, so that some flourish in every climate. The custom of using holly at the winter festival is of great antiquity and is believed to have come from the ancient pagan festivals. It was used at Christmas by early Christians. According to tradition, the bush in which Jehovah appeared to Moses, Santa Claus and Christmas stockings. Saint Nicholas seems to have been the original of our Santa Claus. He was the Bishop of Myra about the year 300, and was very popular because of his good deeds and kindness, especially to children, whose patron saint he is supposed to be. An old legend says that he wished to bestow a gift surreptitiously upon an old nobleman who, though poor, did not want any one to know of his poverty. When the good bishop reached the house he saw the old gentleman asleep by the fire, so he climbed to the top of the chimney and dropped his gift therein, thinking it would fall on the hearth, but it so happened that the money fell into one of the old gentleman's stockings, which his daughter had hung up to dry, where it was found and used as a dowry for his oldest daughter. The old story says that Saint Nicholas never failed to put a gift in the stockings which were hung for him thereafter whenever a daughter of the house was to marry. When our Saint Nicholas comes around on Christmas Eve we look for gifts in our stockings.

Burning the Yule Log

Yule, or Yul, was the name given by the ancient Goths and Saxons to their great festival of the winter solstice, or turning of the year and the name has survived. The burning of the log was a very old Yuletide custom of the Scandinavians who, at the festival, kindled huge bonfires to

the god Thor. Burning the log was practiced in Scandinavia, England, Italy, some parts of France and Serbia. The charred ashes were supposed to have magic powers.

The Original Mince Pie

The mince pie is all that is now left of the traditional immense pie of forced meat and sweet materials formerly made in the form of a cradle, emblematic of the manger in which Jesus was laid. When the large pie first gave place to a number of smaller ones they were made coffin shaped instead of round, as nowadays, to carry out better the idea of the manger. The idea dates back to the days of the early Christians.

The Plum Pudding's Significance

The plum pudding, originally known as the Christmas pudding, is said to be emblematic of the right offerings made by the Wise Men to the infant Christ in the stable at Bethlehem. Like the mince pie it dates back to the early Christians. Both were considered as a test of orthodoxy, as these esculents were held in abomination by the Jews.

Kissing Under the Mistletoe

It is a relic of Scandinavian mythology. Loki hated Balder, the Apollo of the North. Everything "that springs from fire, air, earth and water" had given its promise, under oath, not to hurt Balder, except the mistletoe, which was deemed too insignificant to be asked. Loki made an arrow of mistletoe, which he gave to blind Hoder to shoot and kill Balder, who was restored to life at the request of the gods. The mistletoe was then given to the goddess of love and everyone who passed under it was to kiss to show that it was the emblem of love and not of death. Some authorities allege that kissing under the mistletoe is a survival of the Saturnalia of the ancients.

There is a very considerable people among us who help to make up the melting pot of American citizenship; to whom Xmas has not the significance it has to us—the Jew.

About the time when Christians celebrate the Christmas season the Jew celebrates his "Hanukkah Festival," or Feast of Light, the date of which is determined by the Jewish (lunar) calendar. This year the festival will fall on a day a week preceding our Christmas. Last year it fell at the same time. The synagogue and homes are illuminated and religious songs of joy resound everywhere.

Christ, as we know, was a Jew—He came unto His own and they received Him not. Did you ever wonder just how the Jew regards Xmas? This question was answered several years ago in the Ladies Home Journal by a very prominent Jewish leader, Emil C. Hirsch, D.D. Rabbi of Sinai Congregation, Chicago. The article is so worthwhile I wish I might read it all to you, but as it is quite lengthy I will merely quote the last paragraph, which is a splendid summary of just how the Jew regards Xmas:

"In this country, as in England, the Jew rejoices that the Christmas sentiment is speedily and beautifully progressing toward realization in action. And when he sees the lights leap into glory in his neighbors' homes he breathes a fervent prayer for their happiness. As far as in him lies he helps make their joy a part to his own happiness of his friends and such he shares with him the hospitality of his domestic hearth, but are not of his

religious fraternity. For himself and his own, however, as yet he prefers to wait. He kindles his less radiant Hanukkah lamps, and in their modest glow reads the prophecy of a more inclusive advent when peace will prevail on God's earth, war will be forgotten, prejudice be unknown and love of man for man will be the worship uniting in one fellowship all of God's children."

"O holy Child of Bethlehem! Descend to us, we pray; Cast out our sin, and enter in, Be born in us today. We hear the Christmas Angels The great glad tidings tell; O come to us, abide with us, Our Lord Emmanuel."

MACABEE NOTES

The regular meeting of Torrance Review No. 37 will be held at Legion Hall December 26. After a short business session the Juniors will be entertained with a program and Xmas tree. Mothers, come and bring the children. The Court of the Rose will meet at the usual time on the same date.

IT'S TOASTED
one extra process
which gives a
delicious flavor



Tell Us About Dem Reindeers

